

BRIEFING PAPER FOR THE PRESIDENT'S PRESS CONFERENCE

May 22, 1963

SUBJECT: U. S. Intelligence on Cuba

QUESTION: The Stennis report would seem to reveal that our intelligence on the state of the offensive capabilities in Cuba is less than satisfactory. Do you contemplate taking any measures to fill this gap in our intelligence?

CURRENT SITUATION REPORT:

The Preparedness Investigating Subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Armed Services (four Democrats and three Republicans) reported on May 9 that the intelligence chiefs unanimously stated their opinion that all strategic missiles and bombers have been removed from Cuba, but they "admitted that absolute assurance on this question can come only from penetrating and continuing on-site inspection by reliable observers." The Subcommittee said "there are literally thousands of caves and underground caverns in the island of Cuba and many of these are suitable for the storage and concealment of strategic missiles and other offensive weapons. Refugee and exile reports continue to insist that they are being so utilized."

Building on the above report, Representative Battin on May 20 on the floor of the House delivered an interim report of the "special subcommittee on Cuba and subversion in the Western Hemisphere," composed of Rep. Battin as chairman, Rep. Cramer as vice-chairman, and 10 other representatives, all Republicans. According to Rep. Battin's group, the three "important implications" of the Stennis report were: (1) that administration spokesmen, including the President, Mr. Bundy and Mr. McNamara "have been guilty of misinforming the public about Cuba," (2) a change in the intelligence process is required in order to correct a system "under which facts are not given sufficient weight when they fail to jibe with a preconceived theory of how the Soviet Union is going to behave..." and (3) "a change of policy is urgently needed."

SUGGESTED POINTS IN REPLY:

I think that the Subcommittee has performed a very useful task in reviewing the state of our intelligence with regard to Cuba. With respect to the possibility that offensive capabilities remain in Cuba, the report of the Subcommittee properly observes that the intelligence community is unanimous in its opinion that all strategic missiles and bombers have been removed from the island.

It would

It would, of course, be desirable to have on this point the kind of "absolute assurance" the Subcommittee refers to. As a practical matter, however, such assurance on this as well as on other important questions in international relations is difficult--if not impossible--to obtain. I have every confidence that the intelligence community--under the guidance of Mr. McCone, the Director of Central Intelligence, is exerting the maximum possible effort to ensure that we obtain all necessary information about developments in Cuba.